AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims below replaces all prior versions of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material comprising the steps of:

disposing a powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 wherein R^2, R^3 and R^4 each are one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc on a sintered magnet form of a R^1-Fe-B composition wherein R^1 is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc, said sintered magnet form having a dimension of at least 0.5 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction, and

heat treating the magnet form and the powder at a temperature equal to or below the sintering temperature of the magnet in vacuum or in an inert gas.

2. (Original) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of up to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

3. (Original) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 2, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of

up to 20 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 2 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

4. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 is present in a magnet-surrounding space within a distance of 1 mm from the surface of the magnet form and at an average filling factor of at least 10%.

5. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 has an average particle size of up to 100 μm.

6. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein in said one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 wherein R^2, R^3 and R^4 each are one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc, R^2, R^3 or R^4 contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb.

7. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein a powder comprising a fluoride of R^3 and/or an oxyfluoride of R^4 is used whereby fluorine is absorbed in the magnet form along with R^3 and/or R^4.

8. (Original) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 7, wherein in the powder comprising a fluoride of R^3 and/or an oxyfluoride of R^4, R^3 and/or R^4 contains at least 10 atom% of Dy and/or Tb, and the total concentration of Nd and Pr in R^3 and/or R^4 is lower than the total concentration of Nd and Pr in R^1.

9. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 7 , wherein in the powder comprising a fluoride of R^3 and/or an oxyfluoride of R^4, the R^3 fluoride and the R^4 oxyfluoride are contained in a total amount of at least 10% by weight, with the balance being one or more members selected from among a carbide, nitride, oxide, hydroxide and hydride of R^5 wherein R^5 is one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc.

10. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, further comprising, after the heat treatment, effecting aging treatment at <u>a temperature from 350° C to a temperature</u> lower than the temperature of the heat treatment.

11. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein said powder comprising one or more members selected from an oxide of R^2, a fluoride of R^3, and an oxyfluoride of R^4 wherein R^2, R^3 and R^4 each are one or more elements selected from among rare earth elements inclusive of Y and Sc and having an average particle size of up to 100 μm is disposed in the surface of the magnet form as a slurry thereof dispersed in an aqueous or organic solvent.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the sintered magnet form is cleaned with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic ~~solvents,~~ solvents before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

13. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein a surface layer of the sintered magnet form is removed by shot ~~blasting,~~ blasting before the step of disposing the powder on the surface of the magnet form, and then effecting the heat treatment.

14. (Previously Presented) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein cleaning with at least one of alkalis, acids and organic solvents, grinding, or plating or painting is carried out as a final treatment after the heat treatment.

15. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein said sintered magnet has a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side.

16. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated has a shape having a dimension of 0.5 to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.

17. (New) A method for preparing a rare earth permanent magnet material according to claim 1, wherein the sintered magnet form to be heat treated is obtained by compacting and sintering powder of a mother alloy containing R^1, Fe and B wherein R^1 is as defined in claim 1, and machining the thus obtained sintered block to a shape having a dimension of 4 to 100 mm along its maximum side and a dimension of up to 10 mm in a magnetic anisotropy direction.